

KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
September 13, 2009
4:30 PM Senior Center Alice Dowd Lounge

Members Present: Byron Koh, Yuko Takahashi, Florence Boynton, Bill Hutchinson, Stephanie Joyce, Denise Boyd, Kathy Woods Masalski, Nancy Pagano

Members Absent: Helen MacMellon, Carolyn Platt, Jule Dupre

Minutes of June 2, 2009: Approved as read.

Treasurer's Report: Florence reported that we have \$1455.63 in our account at Town Hall.

Jones Library Report: Carolyn couldn't make this meeting, but Nancy spoke to her and the next carton of books to be sent to Kanegasaki are ready to go except for cataloging. Carolyn would appreciate assistance in getting them sent when this is completed. Nancy B. and Nancy P. will help with this again.

Carolyn will be resigning from the KSCC due to work demands. Byron will contact Bonnie Isman to discuss the future of the Sister Library agreement.

Membership: Yuko Takahashi, Helen MacMellon and Stephanie Joyce's terms ended in June 09. Yuko and Stephanie want to be reappointed. Nancy will check with Helen about what she wants to do and then ask for the Selectboard to reappoint these members.

Lessons/Observations from Kanegasaki:
(Kathy Woods Masalski and Yuko Takahashi)

While all teachers in our program conducted themselves in a very professional manner, Anne Louise White from Fort River School stood out as an outstanding ambassador for Amherst. For example, while playing the piano, she led the Kanegasaki chorus in singing "Hey, Jude" and other Beatle's songs. As a group, we sang "Amazing Grace," followed by Anne's singing a Japanese song that she uses with her students. Anne would very much like to welcome the Kanegasaki visitors next spring—she'd like them to come by Fort River to be entertained for a short time by her students. She will prepare a special program (that fits into her curriculum) for the occasion.

A new middle school is being built—primarily to make sure that the new structure is "earthquake-proof." Moreover, the student enrollment has decreased substantially (low birth rate?), and there were many classrooms that were empty in the building. That may help to explain why the number of students visiting Amherst has decreased over the years.

As we know, the former mayor placed a high priority on Kanegasaki's international role. The new mayor wants Kanegasaki to excel in the English language. Much emphasis was put on this fact during our visit, especially at the middle school.

We were told that the new mayor is not comfortable with the Amherst relationship. Because the former mayor was so very successful with the exchange, the new mayor shies away from it. According to Miyuki Sato-san and Lifelong Learning Takahashi-san, the new mayor needs to be encouraged to visit.

Lifelong Learning Takahashi-san (the one who visited Amherst in the spring) was extremely helpful during our visit. He not only took part in the planning, he and his family were home stay hosts. He would like to return to Amherst next spring with the group.

Of course, the most helpful person, as in the past, was (recently married) Miyuki Sato-san. She attended to every detail. We even had lunch at her mother's restaurant, which was a real treat. Because she is the person most fluent in English, the group—and others—tend to rely upon her for all information, which can at times be confusing for her and for those who expect answers.

Because of some incidents surrounding our visit, we learned that there have been misunderstandings and miscommunication between the two towns. We think we ought to re-examine our charge. The officials in Kanegasaki seem to look to the charge of our committee very carefully and see our role as very important. On Amherst's official site, the online description is "promotes friendship and ongoing relations with Kanegasaki Japan through various special events and ongoing contacts between residents or government bodies of the two communities." That explains why the Kanegasaki folks expect us to be involved not only with the schools, but also with the Select Board. For example, the

Mayor personally asked me to deliver the invitation and information regarding the events not only to Nancy, but also to Aaron.

AMHERST PHOTOS TO BE DISPLAYED IN KANEGASAKI
(Stephanie Joyce contribution)

Stephanie Joyce reported on the Mayor Takahashi's request for photographs to be displayed in during the October celebration in Kanegasaki. In late August, the Mayor requested photographs of Amherst and accompanying text to describe the photos. His office provided a list of buildings and features in our town that he hoped we could provide for the exhibit. Stephanie took pictures and provided the descriptions for each picture including some history and interesting facts. The pictures included views of Town Hall, 250th celebration banners, Police Station, Fire Station, downtown streets, Emily Dickinson Homestead, and Jones Library. She also included pictures of the beginning school days at Wildwood and pictures from the Middle School provided by Denise Boyd. Other pictures included views of the Amherst Farmers Market, the Norwottuck Rail Trail and wildlife, Atkins Farms and apple orchards, Eric Carle Museum, and the Holyoke Range. The committee received a gracious thank you from the Mayor's office for providing the pictures and text for the exhibit.

OCTOBER VISIT TO KANEGASKI

Select Board member, Aaron Hayden, and Senior Center Director/KSCC Staff Liaison, Nancy Pagano, are making final preparations for their trip to Kanegasaki in mid-October. Because of a special invitation from the Mayor of Kanegasaki, they will participate in ceremonies related to the thirtieth anniversary of Kanegasaki' declaring itself a town of Life Long Learning. Kanegasaki's other two sister cities, Chungchung, China and Leinefelde-Worbis in Germany, will also have representatives present.

Both Aaron and Nancy have sent photo power points to Kanegasaki to be included with exhibits and presentations. Aaron has prepared a speech to be made to the assembly as requested. Preparations now include selecting gifts to take, money exchange, and obtaining Japan rail passes. KSCC members have shared their Japan travel literature and much helpful advice with Aaron and Nancy so the trip will go smoothly.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting ended at 6:04 PM. The date of the next meeting will be November 3rd at 4:30 PM in the Senior Center.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Secretary/Liaison, along with contributions from Stephanie Joyce, Kathy Woods Masalski , and Yuko Takahashi